

SAN JOSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW DATE: January 13, 1992

INTERVIEWEE: Leonard McKay

SUBJECT: Family History/Printing & Publishing Business

INTERVIEWER: Patricia M. Cordone, SJHM Volunteer

TRANSCRIBER: Evelyn Cannon, SJHM Volunteer

Introduction by Pat Cordone: January 13, 1992. An interview done by Pat Cordone with Mr. Leonard McKay. The interview was done in his office, Memorabilia San Jose, 250 West St. John Street. There are three sides, 1, 2 and a half of Side 3, tapes available for use. The interview is biographical in nature and includes printing and publishing in San Jose.

LM=Leonard McKay
PC=Pat Cordone

PC I'd like to start out the interview with talking about your family background. Who your parents were and where they were born and where you were born.

LM Okay, well we'll go back even a little further than that. My family first arrived in California in 1853 by covered wagon. They'd come across the plains from Illinois and that was the Barter side of the family. They tell a story of my great grandmother, who was just a baby at the time, and she and her parents came out together. At that time there was a great fear of Indians and Indians would capture part of the wagon train, take particularly the women and children along and they would never see them

again. This particular day an Indian squaw rode up on her pony and I don't know exactly where it was, but she rode up on her pony and wanted to hold the baby and my parents weren't about -- great great grandparents -- weren't about to let her hold the baby. And the Indian squaw could not speak any English and they couldn't speak any Indian so she left very dejected. The poignant part of this story was the next day she came back and she had made a pair of moccasins that she gave to the baby. So it wasn't always a real bad situation. However, they did arrive and they came into California in 1853. My great grandmother's husband had arrived even earlier by ship. He came as a cabin boy from Long Island on a sailing ship. That family name was Layton.

The McKays didn't arrive until 1878 and they came through San Jose on their way to Santa Cruz. My McKays, I think, were probably illegal immigrants when they first came because the McKay clan had been dispersed out of Scotland, the clan leader had foolishly mortgaged all the clan lands when he went off to fight a war in Europe and took the McKays with him to fight and unfortunately they lost. So after they lost the clan lands were taken over, the mortgage was enforced by the British, they were the English at the time, and the McKays scattered all over the world so there are a lot more McKays in Canada, in the United States and Australia than there are in

Scotland today. In any case, they came to Canada originally, came down to Michigan area; they were in the Michigan area in a severe winter there and they were living in a cabin and somehow or another it caught fire and burned to the ground. So they next moved to a tent and had a terrible Michigan winter and it too caught fire and burned to the ground and they lost all their material possessions that they had. They had five children and in order to come to California they sold my grandmother's wedding rings and anything else they could put their hands on. When they arrived, they only came with two pieces of tangible goods that I know of, a bible and a book of Bobby Burns' poems, and you could come from Michigan to California for \$10.00 each and it was cheaper to go from Michigan to California than it was to go from New York to Philadelphia at the time on a train because it required more courage of people to come to California. They first settled in Santa Cruz. There's a history of printing in my family, I don't know the total story behind that except that my grandfather was a printer, the first printer, in Boulder Creek and one of the first printers in Santa Cruz. The family came to the San Jose area in about 1918 and in 1919 Smith Printing was started basically with money that my father put up and he went into business with his mother and his stepfather and it was known as Smith & McKay Printing at that time. Well that _____ about the family background.

I was born here in San Jose in 1921 soon after the business was started. Originally my place of birth was O'Connor Hospital and we lived in a tiny house which still stands over on Seventh and Washington Street _____. I was very sickly as a child and I had had asthma and the family moved to Los Gatos, which at that time advertised itself as "the second most healthy place in the world", the other place being in Egypt somewhere (laughter), but it was very good for me. I grew up pretty healthy after that. My mother had a number of cures that I think contributed to my health. She didn't know I was sick unless I was near death's door because her cures consisted basically of, if you had an open wound she poured iodine in it (laughter). When the blue smoke stopped coming up, the iodine had done its job. If you had a chest cold or any form of asthma, she had a mustard plaster and when the blisters started coming up you were done. And if all of those failed, then she had castor oil. I don't think children today have any idea (laughter) of what these remedies were and the consequences. They say I had to be very close to death's door before my mother ever knew I was sick (chuckle), and having grown up in Los Gatos with that kind of a background I wanted to be the All American Boy so I went out with the other boys camping over in March and April; we went swimming in Los Gatos Creek with no clothing and the consequence was that I had the great fear that my

mother would find my hair wet by the time I got home (laughter). In any case, I grew up a quite healthy lad after that. Eventually, I attended Los Gatos High School, I participated in many of the different athletic events there, on the basketball team, the football team, on the track team; I earned my letters in each of those sports and also somewhat foolishly the stage and I had Olivia de Havilland's mother as a coach when we put on a play out at the Saratoga Players in Saratoga. So it was just at the beginning of the war, the war had already started in Europe, and I guess at that time I recognized that we were going to be in the conflict -- firmly convinced that we were going to be in the war as early as 1938-1939. While many thought that we wouldn't be, I strongly felt that we would so with the consequence that I went to the University of Santa Clara and while there in the Business School I also took a number of engineering courses which helped me later on in my military career because I had done _____ as a pilot and officer in the field artillery. It was my good fortune to finally get assigned to the First United States Infantry Division, the Big Red One, although I earlier _____. My college had been interrupted because of the needs of Uncle Sam and I came back after the end of the war with more than enough units to graduate from college but I had to put my last year in residency at the University of Santa Clara. So at that

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time, in the years 1946-47, I worked full-time at Smith & McKay Printing Company 40 hours a week and also went to school and graduated from Santa Clara.

PC As you were growing up, did you come down to the print shop with your father?

LM Oh yes, I used to work a lot in the print shop but I also worked a lot on the farms around Santa Clara Valley. It was through my farm work that I recognized that I didn't want to be a farmer, that there was an awful lot of hard work in being a farmer. As a matter of fact, I've always thought that the greatest educator in the Santa Clara Valley was Louis Pellier. He's the man who introduced the French prune and he never went to a day of school in California, he never served on a school board, he never was a teacher and yet I consider that he was the greatest educator. And if you ever spent all summer picking prunes on your hands and knees, you figured out there was another way to make a living besides picking prunes. It was also a time when if the crop was good the price was lousy, if the price was good the crop was lousy so there was always a problem. I remember one specific incident that made a tremendous influence on my life; the Dr. J. H. Pond who lived out in Los Gatos and I used to work for him up on the hills above Los Gatos where he had his home. We had at that time two orchards on his property,

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I say "we" -- he had two, I worked for him (chuckle) and I was at that time about 13 years old, but I had gotten to be in charge of the other youngsters picking prunes and things and this particular day we wanted to pick the lower orchard and the lower orchard was down a trail, not a road but a trail, down to a poorly attended orchard -- they plowed it once a year -- but the prunes continued to grow there, there was enough water and they continued to grow and fall so once a year we would hook up his old retired horse that was named "Lila", a white mare of about 25 years old very long in the tooth at that time (laughter), anyway we would hook up Lila to the sled and drag the sled down loaded with prune boxes and then haul it back up via this trail back up there. But he asked if anyone knew how to drive a horse and I said, "Oh absolutely, I know how to drive a horse" -- I didn't know which end you put the feed into (laughter) much less how to drive a horse but that didn't deter me of course. The fact I didn't know how to do it never deterred me in my life (laughter) with dire consequences many times (laughter) and one of the dire consequences was that Lila, once we got all the prunes on the sled and we started up the trail we got to the first turn in the trail and Lila, instead of following the trail, went right straight up the bank. So I pulled on Lila's reins and got her to back down where she promptly backed down and sat on all the prunes and squashed all the prunes,

and the sled I might add too (chuckle). The four runners of the sled just turned over and so Lila was in bad shape right then. So I unhooked Lila, walked her up to the paddock and put her in the barn there and then I went back down and I had to carry each of those 40 pound boxes of oozing prunes back up and I finally then got all that accomplished and told Dr. Pond what happened to them. Well he had probably every good reason to fire me but he didn't and instead he went down and inspected Lila and found that she had a number of slivers in her behind (laughter) so he went back up to the house and he got his forceps, he had his little black bag that he always carried, got his forceps out and he showed me how to take out the first sliver and then from then on I spent the next (chuckle) hour and a half -- I was rather mortified about the whole thing (laughter).

PC You didn't get kicked?

LM I didn't get kicked. No I think I was too old to get kicked. (laughter) But he was a man that wanted me to go and get into business. I had desires to be a forest ranger at the time and he was the one that suggested to go to college and get into business so he had a great influence on my life, a wonderful wonderful person. So that got me up to....

PC Dr. Pond was an M.D.?

LM He was an M.D. and also he was Ph.D. and the Superintendent of Schools over in Sacramento and after that became a medical doctor and so....

PC Very unusual.

LM Very unusual. One time I was working in his trees in the summer, everybody else was gone, it was the summer and I was climbing up the eucalyptus tree and I reached up and grabbed a branch which proved to be dead and I fell down out of the tree and rolled down the hill and got up and shook myself off and thought I was all right until I looked at my arm and I had broken my left arm, it was a clean fracture. So he bundled me up in the car, again probably he had a good reason to fire me but he didn't (chuckle), and instead of firing me he sat with me three hours while we waited for Dr. Horace Jones to return and set the arm, which he did, and then Dr. Pond told me he said, "Now you're gonna have trouble in school with this arm so you come up every morning and I will tutor you on the classes before school starts so you won't fall behind in your studies." So he tutored me in trigonometry and geometry and some of my English courses.

PC Marvelous human being on top of everything else.

LM Yes, marvelous human being so I say he was _____.

PC So you did come sometimes down with your dad to....

LM Oh yes, but I came into the print shop, as a matter of fact. We used to have to hand fold all our things, before the automatic folders we would hand fold these big big stacks of paper. I remember it was even more boring than picking prunes (laughter), and I was out in China a few years ago _____

Association of China, I was going through a big printing plant and I noticed they were still hand folding so I motioned through sign language and asked the Chinese woman to move aside and I took up her bone folder and started folding and they thought that was the funniest thing they ever saw this _____ American....

PC Know how they do it.

LM Know how to do it, yes.

PC So then you started really full-time right after you got back from the war?

LM Well no, I came back from the war and I worked full-time in the business and went to college at the same time graduating in 1947 with a Bachelor's Science and Commerce

degree. My father did not want me to go into the printing business. It was not a really successful business at all and he wanted me to do something else so as I was graduating and walked down the steps of the university _____ I had a great opportunity for job selection. My total opportunity consisted of someone who offered to allow us to go to work to sell Rogers Brothers Silver door to door. That was all a college graduate at that time could really get. It wasn't like today where recruiters come through. But the dean of the college managed to get me a job as I was walking down the steps or a chance of a job with Pan American World Airways and this was when Pan American Airways was the major _____ carrier. So I first started with Pan American in San Francisco and I was transferred soon after that to Honolulu. I spent a little over 13 months in Honolulu where I had a wonderful time because all during the war and afterwards I hadn't had much time for play and this was _____ vacation time. So after 13 months there they transferred me to Tokyo. They were having a serious problem out there; one of the young managers was allowed to bring any of the people he wanted to from the company, he could choose any place in the company and bring them out to straighten out the problems that developed in Tokyo. So I was one of those people that came there and I was only there about eight months. Loved Japan, loved Tokyo, liked it very very much, still a part of it's

there; it was a totally different _____ into, there's not a high rise, it was just _____ burned-out shops that were still there and I was there eight months and the Communists took over China, were taking over China, and they needed somebody down in Hongkong so I was one of the people that was transferred to Hongkong to help the exodus from here, millions of people went to Hongkong. While there many many things had happened and one of the most traumatic was the fact that I had this office in the main hotel of Hongkong, it was kind of the center, well there were two hotels, the Peninsula Hotel which is still there which was the meeting place on the peninsula side of Hongkong and then on the island itself was the Hongkong Hotel which is no longer in existence. But I had this small office there and three Chinese women, who are the most beautiful women in the world (laughter) there and one man all in the office together and we were all working doing our business and behind us on the staircase going up to the upper stories was the _____ officers, high-ranking officers, and some Communists started firing at them through my window and I dug a foxhole right through that floor real fast, I'll tell you (laughter). And it was one of the things that happened out there that didn't even make the newspapers, there was so much of that going on at that time _____. It was at that time that I was first married to a woman I'd met in Japan, an

American, and moved to Hongkong. I was there about another year in Hongkong working and _____ and was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. The company sent me back to San Francisco. When we got back here, they fortunately found I did not have tuberculosis but I had a combination of an attack of asthma and amoebic dysentery which gave almost all exactly the same symptoms.

So from there the company transferred me to Guam and while I was in Guam, I spent three years there and my two oldest children were born. While there I had some ideas of things that could possibly improve Pan American's service. I submitted them to the District Traffic Sales Manager in San Francisco and I never heard another word from any of them. The first consisted of the fact that our passengers were getting very wet; the difference in Guam between the rainy season and the dry season was that in the rainy season it rains five times a day and in the dry season it only rains three times a day (laughter). So it always managed to rain whenever the passengers arrived and everybody'd get soaked. It didn't rain like it does here, it just poured. So I built a model of a covered ramp that could be pulled out to the plane and it wasn't one of these fancy things like they have today, it was just on wheels and an awning and they just grabbed it and pulled it out.

PC Same idea though.

LM Same idea. And I submitted that, sent in the material to San Francisco and never another word about it. At that time we were flying Boeing Stratig Cruisers which were a development of the old B29 with the underbelly on it, they were big airplanes but they only held 60 passengers. But the flights were long, they were slow -- they were fast planes for the time but slow today compared to jets -- and so most of the flights would be up to 12 hours in length. Pan American at the time had a number of very very good travelogues, they had travelogues of South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and I proposed that we start showing some of these travelogues on the movies on the planes. It would occupy the people's time and if we set up, if somebody was going to Australia we'd show the travelogue of the Orient maybe they would continue their trip to the Orient or maybe to South America. Again I sent this in and I never heard another word. The third thing that I submitted was the fact that at Guam at the time we were dealing with a lot of construction workers and the construction workers had a special discount fare but we only used this when we had empty seats on the plane and it was a much reduced fare; so I proposed that they just take the seats and push them closer together and give these people a reduced fare all the time and again I never heard another word until I went in in

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December of 1952, I think it was. At that time the Sales Manager called me in the office and said I'd been in the sun too long, that he didn't think I should be staying out in Guam any longer because I came up with all these crazy ideas. No way the airline could ever carry movie equipment on the plane, it was just too heavy. No passengers would ever put up with first and third class passengers on the same plane, and the people didn't care if they got wet out in Guam. That was something part of travel, _____ travel you got wet when you were getting off the airplane.

PC One does pay a penalty for being a little ahead of your time (chuckle).

LM Well, he and I didn't see eye to eye and it was soon after that that I quit Pan American. People today say that it was deregulation that killed Pan American; it wasn't deregulation, it was bad management that killed Pan American then. And that we were the bad guy who had routes all over the world; it was a great airline but we were dependent upon government subsidies and always have been. While I was never sorry I quit, one of the reasons I quit was the fact I couldn't find anybody else that was ever sorry they quit Pan American (laughter). So I left and came back here. The Orient was still very very unstable and unsettled. I had come back earlier and

bought a house in San Jose and with the intention that I didn't know what was going to happen in Hongkong. We were very very fearful of the Chinese just coming right on down.

PC So it was the idea then of settling here?

LM Well at least having a way to put my wife and children to stay.

PC I think we need to turn this over.

Note: There is a brief silence at this point. A note on the tape case says, "#109A and 109B are combined on this duplicate tape."

PC Beginning again now with your purchasing of a home in San Jose to assure that the wife and the children had a place to live. What year was that?

LM That was 1953. A house at that time cost about \$12,000 or \$12,300. Fifty dollars is what we paid for the house and the monthly payments were about \$125 a month and I didn't know how I was going to be able to afford that \$125 a month (laughter). But once I had the house here and the place -- I was supposed to have been transferred to Japan but I had had this problem with the Sales

Manager and they decided they would put me in the San Francisco office for a while, and I got on the Bayshore Highway, that was before it was a freeway, and you would race 60 miles an hour and go about two miles and slam on the brakes at the next stoplight, then you'd race another, and I drove that one day I said, "No, this isn't for me." So I left the airline and came to work with Smith & McKay Printing Company at the time. My father was still alive at that time but the business had been badly rundown, no new equipment had been purchased for years. My grandmother and my father were involved in the business. Clifford Smith had left in the late 1920's with another woman and all the company money and left a huge mortgage on the equipment at the time so the business had never really prospered very well. As a matter of fact, my father never gained much money out of the business _____ the employees had to be paid, much to my mother's great chagrin. So when I came into the business it was very rundown and it was not a very profitable business, and for the next 20 years -- 30 years really -- it was a matter of trying to replace equipment and build the business up. In 1960, there was a major change. I had gone into specialty work at that time; I found that it was very very difficult to compete head on with everybody else who were willing to work night and day for basic wages so we developed a specialty at that time of what we called "blind embossing", raised

printing that required special equipment and that changed the direction of the business to where we then became less competitive with other companies and went into quality printing, and that proved to be a pretty good move over the years. My son today has the Memorabilia --

he has Smith & McKay Printing over on the other side, I have Memorabilia. But he has Smith & McKay Printing and they have won some of the top awards in the United States and a whole wall of just awards that they won in all the great work that they're doing. He's doing far better work than I was ever able to do that helped it to be a holographic business and so on. That's been a very great good but it's still difficult, any small business has a difficult time.

PC Did you start using the equipment for the embossing?

LM Yes, yes. That was about 1960.

PC How did you get turned in that direction?

LM We had a customer which was Mellonics Division of Litton Industries that were using a special envelope and it was made out of what we call "eaze-erase bond" it was a special kind of bond with a glycerine coating on it and you could cold emboss it but it wouldn't hold the embossing long. And I had been to a trade show in

Southern California and I saw a machine that would possibly do this and what it did in effect was it added heat to it like ironing your clothing with a cold iron, it's pretty hard to do, but once you add the heat it makes a big change. And so I bought the first piece of equipment to do this work; I think we since now have five or six presses like that that are much much more complicated, but it did do the job and from that we gradually expanded that end of the business -- embossing and foil stamping which carried over to the embossing and demography carried over to that and now my son does holographics, that's all _____ specialties and there are some other people that do part of it but he's probably the leader for the West Coast now for the holographic end of the business.

PC And he went in right after he got out of school or....?

LM Yes, he joined me here and he's worked his way up right from the bottom. In 1983, well back up a little bit. Over that period of time whenever I made a few dollars out of the printing business, I put into book publishing particularly historic books of San Jose and Santa Clara County and they have never been very good money makers but they've satisfied the need that I had to do something about that. And so in 1983, I had been married to a lady by the name of Naomi and she died of cancer and I was

very devastated by her death and I really didn't feel like going on in the business anymore and so my son fortunately agreed to take over the business. At that time, I was looking for something to do and Clyde had been working on his history of San Jose for quite a few years (chuckle) and so I set about trying to get the book published and so I worked very closely with Clyde for well over eight years at his house _____ several days working with him and finally got the book finished and got it published. At that time, I had heard about a process known as "fore-edge painting." The fore-edge of a book is the leading fore like your forehead but that's the leading edge of the book, the righthand edge of the book. Back in the Middle Ages from the time that they used to do the big manuscripts they needed to put something on the edges of the book because the books were laid flat and they were huge big things and they had big sheepskin pages and if you stood them up they tore out the bindings so they would lay all the books flat but they didn't know _____ so they would start writing off the edge of the books and describing what was inside the books. Well that later developed into a thing where they instead of, once books became smaller and Gutenberg invented movable type, they could then make books that would stand up straight but people decorated the sides of these books. And when they decorated the sides of the books, these were hand painted and Henry VIII was King

and Anne Boleyn, his third Queen, was going to go to the gallows, she carried with her a little missile that she had and it read "Honor Regina Englaise and Queen of England." At the same time he was having a very fancy book done over at Vienna, one of his books, all decorated with scenes of Vienna on it. So the process had been developed for over a period of time. It was then changed in the late 1870's where it was done as called "hidden fore-edge painting" so that when the book is closed you don't see the painting. I'll show you a couple examples of this in a minute. I had been over to England in 1984 and I had been looking for one of these books for my own library, I have a rather extensive library at home particularly pertaining to history, but I had wanted one of these books in my library and I went into a bookstore -- a number of bookstores -- in Cambridge and asked if I could buy one of these books which are almost always old and I was told no, they occasionally got them in but I might not like the book that they had and something else and they wouldn't even put my name on the list. I did the same thing at Oxford and couldn't get a book there either and I was going to the British Museum on Regent Street in London and I happened to glance in a bookstore window and I saw one of these books in the bookstore window so I immediately dashed in and asked if I could buy their book. They said no it wasn't theirs but there was a chap down the next alley so I went down there and

the third door on the left I went up two flights of stairs, knocked on the green door and asked if there was anybody there they would help me. So I did all of that and I don't know if that was a good move or not and I ended up with more headaches from _____ but anyway I found a chap there that said yes he could take care of it for me.

So I was just getting Clyde's book started in production and I arranged with him to take a limited number of those books and have them fore-edge painted and sketch _____. Now here is an example of the first gummy books you have, the book has been bound in genuine Moroccan leather, the gold stamping is 22 karat gold, the end papers are all hand marbled, the book has been goldleafed all the way around, but what really makes it unusual is this picture that you can see develop when it's done on the side.

PC Elegant.

LM Yea and those are all handpainted and that's called "hidden fore-edge painting."

PC We need to be sure to get a picture of that.

LM Okay. Then I had my own book done which is extremely

rare because this one is a hidden fore-edge painting but it is a double fore-edge painting. So this one again is in Moroccan leather; this book has been gaufered, you see the design in here -- that's very rare -- the headbands match -- the leather _____ here, the gold stamping is there, the hand marbled end papers are there but in this case when we open it you see a picture of the Electric Tower and downtown San Jose but when we turn it over you see a totally different picture here.

PC Oh, amazing.

LM Yea, so that's one. However, it didn't work out as good as I had hoped it would because I sent 300 books to be bound, in the process of doing the job we had any number of things happen the first of which was that the place they got the leather from was Ethiopia and they had a big war going on in Ethiopia and they ate all the darn goats instead of _____, they had a hard time buying the goatskins. Then they sent them up to a tannery to specially dye the leather just the color that the _____ wanted _____ and that had to be done in Nottingham and that batch of leather mildewed. Then the next thing that went wrong was the English pound -- I had to pay for these in English pounds -- was \$1.53 to \$1.91 so that took about a third off of my cost in the books on that _____. Then they shipped me the books back in

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small quantities 10 at a time and one of the shipments went from London to New York where it was gonna be trans-shipped to San Francisco, I had to get the books there. In the meantime, I had people I'd sold books to that were anxious to get their books back, I'd taken deposits. And in trans-shipment somebody highjacked a whole truck and stole all 10 of my books along with everything else that was on the truck (chuckle). Then the fellows that did the goldleafing were -- there are only two people who still do hand goldleafing in England and they were very close. One of them got in an automobile accident and was killed, the other one promptly had a nervous breakdown and that stopped the goldleafing. Then the shop that I was dealing with went bankrupt in the middle of the thing and the fellow that was having binderies, Sangorski & Sutcliffe, one of the most famous binderies in all of England, went bankrupt (laughter) _____.

We eventually got a portion of the books back but it was -- and I'm very proud of the fact that we got it done, proud of the fact that Clyde got his book finished. He's such a remarkable man and this is just a tiny, tiny bit of his total knowledge.

PC And he has a copy?

LM Yes he has a copy of the, not of the double fore-edge but of the regular fore-edge. And his knowledge is so great

and so vast that we only have a tiny bit, oh we do have something, that's the important thing. It is a very worthwhile addition to the historical impact of San Jose.

PC So the specialization for Smith & McKay itself probably was a saving grace for the company.

LM Oh yes, yes because it's a very very difficult business today particularly when you're involved with union contracts, which is what today is, and there's so much competition and there's so many changes that come about in the industry, things that we were doing 30 or 40 years ago are nonexistent today. I go back and talk once in a while to the foreman back there and he's the only one that even understands what I'm talking about on some of the old casings.

PC In that short period of time.

LM Yes, a short period of time. The whole typesetting business is totally changed. They used to use computers -- or not computers but they used to use linotype machines, then we used services and almost all the services are going out of business now because everybody's setting them up on their own Mackintosh -- that's a Mackintosh right here. Things that I saw at trade shows, one of the reasons I was in England in 1984

was to go to a trade show. At the trade show I saw a machine that cost a quarter of a million dollars. Today you can do the same thing on a Mackintosh Computer with specialized _____. So it's been such a tremendous change.

PC Does the company now use computers for any of their work?

LM Yes, they use computers, they have about I guess four computers on the other side along with computers that are installed right on the machines, particularly the paper cutters. The paper cutter all has a built-in computer that changes its settings and does it exactly optimally and accurately. I remember back in the old days when my dad used to particularly run a paper cutter and he would take lifts of paper -- the paper was so heavy you'd fold it up into lifts to put it onto the paper cutter and then you'd put a wooden ruler on top of that and you'd get the next lift and slide the paper on the ruler so that the bottom sheet didn't pick up the top sheet and get it all bunched up at the back to do it this way. You would have two or three lifts in the paper cutter getting ready to cut and the telephone would ring and somebody would ask you about something, the progress of a job or _____ or something like that, and you would come back and cut the paper after that and we had more pieces of rulers around that place (laughter) where he had forgotten to take out

the ruler and get it out which didn't do the cutting knife very much good either (laughter). People don't have to do that now because they have automatic paper cutters that have to load some and they have all kinds of things.

PC What was your father's feeling when you came back and left Pan Am and wanted to start in the business? You really....

LM Well he was, I think, a little bit relieved at the time because he was very sick at that time. He only lived about a year after I got back so he was (laughter) I think relieved and he was very anxious to see his grandchildren too, you know. He had _____
_____ very fond of the children. It was a sad time, he fell off the roof of his house and he died. So that was rather tragic but it was lucky I was back at the time and he gave me a start in the business because it would have been very difficult to do otherwise.

PC The beginnings then were difficult.

LM Oh, very difficult and they still are. It's very very hard for a small business; as a matter of fact I'm personally convinced that the government's going to put all small business right out of business. All the

environmentalists are doing such a good job of protecting everybody that businesses are going to be nonexistent. It's just so hard to do things. I can imagine today if you tried to dry prunes by dipping prunes in lye just like we did. That was the way to check the skin and I never heard of anybody ever getting sick from this or anything else and if you did that today, God you'd have more environmental protection people out, they'd have hot vats of lye water boiling away, they'd have people _____, the fact that we put things out in fields, you'd have more people out to protect -- protecting ourselves to death, protecting ourselves right out of business. One of the reasons Japanese can make _____ so much cheaper, it costs about \$2-3,000 just to get this protection. Then we scare everybody to death, we have to post all these signs all over the businesses telling how dangerous it is to work here. It's a lot more dangerous if you don't have a job.

PC And it's _____ in the printing business itself you are involved with the union. When they have their protections it starts to turn you off.

LM Absolutely. Matter of fact about oh 30%, maybe more, of the printing equipment that is out at the Historical Museum came out of this shop and so many of the pieces out there if you ever have the Environmental Protection

people come you people wouldn't be allowed to run that. You'd have to have the proper safety places on the machines.

PC Some of them are being used.

LM They're being used but mostly just for demonstration but even for demonstration I don't think _____.

End of Side 1.

Note: Conversation ends in mid-sentence.

Side 2 begins.

PC Probably not. You could get a finger caught in that....

LM Yes, (laughter) you could.

PC I mentioned about community involvement. I notice that you have Lions and Rotary, was that something that you did because you wanted to or as a business thing or kind of a combination of the two?

LM Well, a combination of the two. I do feel that we're very lucky to live here in San Jose and Santa Clara Valley. I mean it's the greatest place in the world to live but I think it's also part of our responsibility to protect it as being what it is and in that regard I think

we can do that sort of thing through a number of different institutions here. When I first came back I was involved in the Red Cross quite heavily and the Red Cross Blood Drive and I still contribute by going on Saturday morning to contribute blood because I think it's something that should be done and it's a great help. Then I joined the Toastmasters Club and I found out that when I was with Pan American in Guam I needed to be better on my feet when I would speak and so I joined the Toastmasters but I've always been very enthusiastic about the Toastmasters Club. In the early 1970's I came on the Historic Landmarks Commission at that time and we were just developing the San Jose Historic Museum. At that time the Museum was under the direction of the supervision of the Landmarks Commission. We were put into the Parks Department merely to have a way to pay the employees which were basically contract employees when we switched over. Clyde was a contract employee when he was the Director of the Museum out at the fairgrounds for many many years, but once we got him here and started expanding we needed a way to handle our payroll people so we came under the Parks & Recreation Department, which was a mistake; we should have been a separate department, we really should have because we were down on the list every time the money comes in, we don't have any way to really politically get our own wishes known and that was something that should have been different and wasn't.

But in any regard, we were then in the process of building the Museum and when I was on the Landmarks Commission as President of the Commission it was part of our authority to do this. And we had a director at the time and things were being diverted -- they weren't being stolen, I don't think, but they were being diverted from the Museum to other locations without authorization. And it meant that something had to be done and changes had to be made and I was involved in doing that and I decided I didn't want to get involved in doing that any longer (chuckle), I didn't like _____ the personnel particularly when I wasn't a paid manager. But I was involved in many of the early developments when I was there. In 1976, I guess _____, the Realty Board came and they wanted a project for the Museum for the Bicentennial of the city and so I was called by them to suggest a number of programs and the top one I suggested was the Electric Tower so they were the ones that did it, I wasn't involved except with the suggestion.

I was very involved in the development of the Peralta Adobe. I recruited Tom McEnery but I didn't push the work myself to get that done.

PC I saw your name on the plaque over there.

LM But you'll see his on the top (chuckle). That's right
_____. Anyway, that was....

PC Continuing on now talking about the contributions that you've made as far as the history of San Jose is concerned. You talked about the Peralta Adobe. Was that land that surrounds the Peralta Adobe all part of it or did you have to acquire that?

LM No, that was acquired -- fortunately I've been able to be associated with three people who I think are the giants of history existence around here and one was Theron Fox and he convinced the City to acquire the property around there. Second of course is Clyde Arbuckle who's phenomenal, and the third was Ralph Rambo and I've always considered myself to be very lucky to have been associated with each of them. But it was basically through Theron's work that the City acquired the property but nothing had been done. So in 1975 I felt that we had to do something about getting the building restored. It was there, it had been there of course since 1905, correction 1805, and it was the last of the adobes in all of San Jose, which at one time we had 109 adobes in San Jose, so it was the only one that still remained and it was a very important adobe because it was Maria Peralta's contribution to San Jose. It was finally restored and we raised the money to do that; after the restoration we

then.... Another chap who had been very very influential was Jim Arbuckle, who was no longer in the community then -- no direct relation to Clyde. But he and I set about building the Pellier Park and so at that time we did, and we raised the money, bought the land, developed the property and got that done in time for the City's Bicentennial. The Peralta was done in time for the country's Bicentennial about two years after each other. It was a little before that time, I think 1972, when I developed the walking tours of San Jose and that's when we first got started on those, and I think that contributed to the overall recognition of our downtown area particularly around here. And we used to bring folks by the Peralta Adobe and my office was directly across the street from where Louis Pellier had a house; matter of fact, my office was located on the site on which his nephew had the house across the street. And one day a woman came in, whose name will be unmentioned, but she came in and asked if I would be interested in seeing this certificate she had gotten and it was the certificate that Louis Pellier had been awarded for exhibiting the best 16 varieties of pears at an 1865 San Francisco Horticultural Exhibit. Now you can't find 16 varieties of pears in all of California today but he got an award for it from the City at that time. It was a big beautiful certificate; she was very excited about the fact so she said, "I want you to have this," and so I

took it and I took it down to San Jose Art, Paint & Wallpaper and I had them frame it and they did a beautiful job. Whenever the school kids would come by on the tours, I would show them this picture and tell them about Louis Pellier and _____ pears. Well I was out of the office one day and this woman came by and she said, "Well, I want my picture back." She took the picture, the frame, the whole thing (laughter) and that was the last I ever saw of it (laughter). But I'm sure it had a good fate someplace; in any case, that was one of the things.

Recently I've been on this Fallon Statue Committee for the placing of that; we had this -- quite a little bee hive, and I've also been involved recently in San Jose Library Foundation on their Old Movie Night. I found that over the years there had been some 16mm movies developed but they were all in terrible shape; the 16mm is really obsolete today, nobody uses it at all anymore. So I conceived the idea and we would take and have a movie night. The Foundation was anxious that we would use these old movies and I think we only had one left in the library at the time, it was on New Almaden, and in the first hundred feet of the movie there were at least 50 splices so it was just unusable. And since then I've located about 11 different movies of San Jose, and we put on a fund raiser for the San Jose Library Foundation

which will be coming up -- the next fund raiser will be April 2nd -- and we now have five or so videotapes that people can go to the library and check these out. The movies that we'll have on the 2nd of April will be the Penney's Explosion -- were you here then?

PC Yes.

LM Remember that? That was a very dramatic event. Most of these, or many of these, five of them were put on by the canned TV in the early 1960's. And the second one will be The Sixty Years of Flight and it's the story of early aviation in this area from the time of John Montgomery up until the opening of Chermo C(?), which was at that time just brand new and just getting opened. And the third one will be on Niles Canyon and the early movie industry up there. So that will be coming up and fortunately everything we take in will go directly to the Library Foundation. It raises about 5 or 6,000 bucks; everybody has a good time, they charge a reasonable rate. They have wine, hors d'oeuvres and a fun evening. They charge \$25.00 which most people can afford (laughter), they could up until this year (laughter), I don't know if they will this year or not.

I guess though the thing that was the most gratifying to me was getting Clyde's book printed. I was involved in

getting a fire truck to Australia to the volunteer fire department down there that got _____ a big brush fire they had in 1983 which was about ten times worse than the local fire last year. That was kind of gratifying too. Other than that, I keep collecting stuff. The main reason I'm down here is I don't have room at home to keep things, and one of the things that I've felt very strongly about is that San Jose has never recognized its artists. It's had a number of very good artists and I've been collecting over the years paintings myself and I have quite a number of them around here and sometime or another we've got to get busy and do something. In the meantime, I'll keep collecting if I can afford it and try to save them if I can. I have a library at home of about 3000 photos of San Jose and another chap, who was in the office and died of a heart attack last spring, and I just finished a book on a Postcard History of San Jose and it's already to go right now but I ran out of money (chuckle) and so I hope the Museum will put that in reserve for us.

PC Boy, that might be a nice premium for membership.

LM Well, I've been talking to Kathy Mueller about it. I hope that the Museum will see their way to clear to do it and I would be willing to contribute some money towards that to see that it gets published. I feel kind of an

obligation to Wally, a very very close and good friend of mine, to get it done. It just got too involved last year, I had a little problem with my heart myself and I didn't want to get involved in all the physical aspects of producing a book. In the meantime, we have around here the directories going back to 1870's, people can trace their family history, a lot of them do come in here; books up on the top shelf are some of the books I've been involved in even publishing, printing, writing. And in the libraries down here we have quite a number of books here, there are the Sanborn maps which are the early maps of San Jose and there are oh a number of other pieces around that are a little bit unusual. I'm sure you'll find them over at the Historic Museum if something happens to me. In the meantime, I'm enjoying them myself.

PC Mr. McKay's speaking of a an entire wall of San Jose City Directories and other books with the large map books down below, quite an impressive collection.

LM A messy collection (laughter).

PC Well, most collections can get that way.

LM But there's a lot of things there, there's great registers and there's the Thompson & West original.

Thompson & West great registers tell about everybody who was a voter at the time; voters of course were all men but it gives how old they were, what their height was, their complexion, their color, their eyes, the color of their hair, invisible marks and what they did and where they came from and when they arrived here and how they voted and everything, quite an interesting way for someone trying to trace family history.

PC That book on the front is dated 1892.

LM Yes, this is 1892 and then I've got copies of 1906, 1884, 1890, 1879. The Sanborn maps are very interesting because they give an exact description of locations and buildings and things here, very accurate, very good.

PC Well, I certainly appreciate your time and all the preparation that you did for this interview and thank you very much.

In summary, Mr. McKay was a most willing, well organized and well prepared interviewee. He enjoyed the interview and I feel that he told some wonderful stories not only about the printing business but as a bonus his time with Pan American and other aspects of his life. Pictures were taken at the time of the interview and he also gave notes which were printed out on his computer having to do

with when he won the Don Goldeen Award for a person who has done the most in a certain year for San Jose. He does have a p.s. that there is a list of books, awards and citations available should the Museum need it of all the honors that he has won. A most enjoyable subject.

End of Side 2